fund would consist of budgetary support from the Ministry of Mines and contribution by the profit making Central Public Sector Undertakings engaged in exploration and exploitation of mineral resources, ferrous, non-ferrous as well as coal, lignite and oil and gas to be linked to their net profit.

(c) In the report submitted by the Task Force for development of mineral industry in the North-Eastern States, candidate mineral deposits have been identified for quick exploitation, besides exploration status of known mineral resources of North-Eastern Region and action for accelerating development and industrialisation in the North-Eastern Region. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) regularly takes up investigations for exploring various mineral occurrences in the Region. Investigations are currently on for limestone in Jaintia Hills District, Meghayala, resource survey for dimensional stones in Meghalaya, and graphite in Arunachal Pradesh. Programme for appraisal of mineral/natural resource potential development on cadastral map base have also been initiated by GSI in the State of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. Exploration and exploitation of minerals is a continuous process depending upon the availability of prospects in the country including North-Eastern Region which is a priority area to the Central Government agencies.

Sickness of VSP

528. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is likely to become sick;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the production of the company during last three years, year-wise and the capacity utilisation as on date;

(d) whether the Management has been requesting Central Government to convert the company's loan into equity;

(e) if so, the number of times the management requested on that score and the reaction of Government thereof; and

(f) the remedial measures being taken to revive the Company?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS):

(a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The details of production and capacity utilisation during the last three years are as follows:

Production (in '000 tonnes)

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Liquid steel	2380	2420	2540
Saleable Steel	2136	2136	2250
Capacity utilisation (%)			
Liquid Steel	79	81	85
Saleable Steel	80	80	85

(d) and (e) The proposal of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (Visakhapatnam Steel Plant) to convert their loans into equity has recently been considered by Government and it has been decided to give the following financial reliefs to the Company:

(i) conversion of Rs. 791 crore interest free loan to 7% non-cumulative redeemable preference capital, redeemable after 2000-01; and

(ii) conversion of Rs. 542.47 crore of loan advanced to RINL from 1993-94 to 1995-96 into 7% non-cumulative preference capital redeemable after 10 years.

(f) In view of 'a' & 'b' above, does not arise.

Revival and Modernisation of IISCO

529. SHRI GAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the proposal for revival and modernisation of Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) has been pending with Government for a long time; and

(b) if so, the present state of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) Indian Iron & Steel Company Ltd. (IISCO) was referred to BIFR in June 1994. Various schemes/proposals for revival and modernisation of IISCO were